

# **Las Californias Subcommittee**

## **Biodiversity Along the Border Committee**

### **Subcommittee Meeting Notes**

May 22, 2007

#### **Participants**

Bruce April, CalTrans

Guillermo Caballero, Colegio de Arquitectos del Municipio de Tijuana

Mike Chapel, USDA Forest Service & California Biodiversity Council

Crystal Crawford, San Diego Association of Governments

Esperanza Días, Gobierno Municipal de Ensenada, B.C., Mexico

Todd Ferrara, California Resources Agency

Isabel Granillo, The Nature Conservancy

Keith Greer, San Diego Association of Governments

Kevin Hunting, California Department of Fish & Game

Richard Kiy, International Community Foundation

Gonzalo De Leon Giron, Parque Nacional Constitucion 1857 (CONANP)

Laura Martinez Rios, Pro Estero

Lauren McNees, California Biodiversity Council

Thom Porter, California Department of Forestry & Fire Protection

Ron Saenz, San Diego Association of Governments

Santos Soto, Parque Nacional Constitucion 1857 (CONANP)

Jerre Stallcup, Conservation Biology Institute

Miguel Vargas, ProNatura

Kathy Viatella, The Nature Conservancy

Cristina Villeda, SEMARNAT en Baja California

Gregory Thomsen, Bureau of Land Management

Cristina, SEMARNAT, reported back from her agency. Her boss was officially appointed director (previously interim) and he supports the Biodiversity Along the Border. She worked on a proposal that identifies most critical conservation projects on the Mexico side of the border. There are 7 of them. Some are more urgent than others, and some are already begun. Some of these projects provide the potential and opportunity for a more permanent binational cooperative agreement. A permanent cooperation could be modeled after the Border Area Fire Council which is comprised of many agencies on both sides of the border, and it works.

Project Titles:

1. Land/habitat preservation at the Tijuana/Tecate corridor
2. Visiting opportunities at Natural Protected Resources of Parque Nacional Constitucion 1857
3. Pilot project for recreational opportunities at Parque Nacional Constitucion 1857
4. Rehabilitation of the indigenous culture (cultural center?) at Parque Nacional Constitucion 1857
5. Pino Piñonero (Pinion Pine) marsh near Ensenada
6. Ecological Reserve in Ensenada
7. Conservation of Doña Petra Canyon

#### Project Descriptions:

1. (explained by Miguel Vargas) Conservation/preservation opportunity in the area between Tijuana and Tecate, also known as the San Ysidro area. IMPLAN has a detailed analysis of the area, and is one of the primary stakeholders that needs to be involved. There is one private land owner who owns most of the land in the area. IMPLAN has spoken with them. There is a proposed budget for this project.

Keith Greer, SANDAG, brings up that there is a 3rd border crossing being proposed for this region (SR 11) and that the planners involved want a binational view of the mitigation opportunities. This could potentially partner with project #1.

2. (explained by Santos Soto) This general project would provide more enticing opportunities to visitors to the Parque Nacional Constitucion 1857 in an effort to increase visitorship. It would include more audio/visual educational opportunities, etc.

3. (explained by Santos Soto) Parque Nacional Constitucion 1857 suffers from some degradation to the natural areas from the number of visitors it receives. The pilot project would evaluate what recreational needs are contributing to this degradation, and if it would be possible to meet those needs and eliminate degradation at the same time.

4. (explained by Santos Soto) This project would provide opportunities to the indigenous people within the borders of Parque Nacional Constitucion 1857 to preserve their heritage which coexists in good conservation with the land there.

5. (explained by Santos Soto) The Pino Piñonero (Pinion Pine) community in Parque Nacional Constitucion 1857 is threatened by a plague/drought that kills large populations. The project would evaluate the conservation opportunities and

needs for these trees. Also, the indigenous people of this region rely on these trees.

Isabel, City of Ensenada, pointed out that these Parque Nacional Constitucion 1857 projects have the potential to raise greater awareness among the general population about the importance of conservation. This explains the importance of the park beyond just recreation.

Kathy, TNC, suggested that a partnership between the Parque Nacional Constitucion 1857 and the Anza-Borrego State Park in California should be explored for feasibility. The area between the two parks is ideal for conservation.

Jerre, Conservation Biology Institute, said that an evaluation of the best habitat linkages between the two countries will be done in 2008 by the San Diego Natural History Museum.

6. (explained by Laura) Estero de Punta Banda is an area in Ensenada that is under extreme development pressure and the city is trying to keep the development concentrated into one area, but they can't do this for sure unless other areas are designated as untouchable. This area is very important bird habitat for birds that are threatened/endangered in the US, and this area is used by birdwatchers, some of which come from the US.

7. (explained by Laura) Doña Petra Canyon is an area near Ensenada that is also under significant urban development pressures. The national housing department is currently doing a general plan and the city has purchased some land for conservation but most land is privately owned. The local community is very interested in conservation. There are a lot of hikers, cyclists, and other recreationists who need opportunities. Unfortunately private landowners and potential buyers have much more \$ to offer than the city does for purchasing land.

## Next Steps

Now that some potential projects have been identified, the next step is to determine the process of implementing them. Questions that need to be answered include: Who's going to lead the projects? Will there be a formal agreement? How will timelines and other decisions be made?

Because time is sensitive, it will be best to start working on the projects with the resources available while simultaneously deciding on structural/organizational details. The structure will need to go beyond political changes because parties and priorities change with elections.

There should be a co-chair from each side of the border. Resources Agency (or a delegate of at the local level) and SEMARNAT probably make the most sense.

Kathy and Miguel will draft a mission statement to propose what a continuing committee should look like.